

Recently, I attended a press conference in the City of Chino where I had the opportunity to stand with the City Council and members of the community to voice our concerns and opposition to the planned State Mental Health Correctional Facility for the criminally insane.

The City of Chino already has three maximum-security prisons in existence housing 9,000 inmates; the California Institution for Men, the Stark Youth Correctional Facility and the California Institution for Women. The proposed mental correctional facility would be the City of Chino's fourth facility, which would harbor criminals who have pled insane to avoid penalties associated with the three strikes law.

There are many concerns that come to mind regarding this issue. I am concerned that a mental health facility whose primary function is mental health rehabilitation will consider the function of incarceration as secondary. Operating budgets for mental health facilities primarily fund doctors whose objective is rehabilitation at the expense of security.

The Chino Valley community, suffering through the Kevin Cooper tragedy and recent murder of a prison guard, deserves better.

In an article pertaining to the State Mental Health Facility in Napa, doctors argued that any facility which houses the criminally insane is an inherently dangerous place; most facilities have inadequate personnel to deal with the rise and increase of high risk offenders. To maintain minimal staff levels, administrators must rely on unlicensed and temporary workers.

Staff at mental facilities are most often women handling criminally insane men. A forensic nurse at the Napa facility was quoted as saying, "Clients here have less supervision, and more freedom than the prisoners at San Quentin, even though they may have killed more than once."

It is obvious to me and the leaders of the Chino Valley, that proposing a mental health facility for the criminally insane in the heart of a city that is experiencing tremendous population growth and fiscal expansion is not healthy for our community, for the area's economy, or for our children.

Let the rest of San Bernardino County stand in strong support of the 4th District, the city of Chino and against the state proposal. Our county deserves more respect.